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## Senator Mansfield Speech at Olivet College - The Nixon Doctrine

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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FOR RELEASE TUESDAY A.M.'S

REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

at the

BEGOLE-BROWNELL LECTURE, OLIVET COLLEGE, OLIVET, MICHIGAN

Monday, March 29, 1971

8:00 p.m. c.s.t.

THE NIXON DOCTRINE

I have not come here to make a political speech. Spring is not the season for politics, unless you are a young man running for the Presidency. Or unless you are a President in your first term. I am no longer that young. I am in my fourth term in the Senate. I run for office only in Montana and I have only recently been re-elected.

In any event, the subject of my remarks is not political. The Nixon Doctrine is not a partisan policy. It was not advanced by the President as a partisan thrust. It was not met in the Senate with a political parry. On the contrary, when the President issued this Declaration on Asian policy eighteen months ago, support was immediately extended to him from the Senate. It came from Republicans and it came from Democrats.

What differences there are with regard to foreign relations, derive from policies not from politics and they are shared by members of both parties. The Senate, today, is not an intensely partisan forum. As Majority Leader, I have no political axes to grind. My relationship with a Republican President has been correct and cordial. In matters of foreign policy, the relationship does not differ greatly from that which existed with his predecessor, a Democrat.

Over the years in Washington, I have seen something of the burdens of the Presidency. They are great and lonely. In foreign affairs, the President is out in front at all times. The pressure is direct and relentless. In this connection, when the late John F. Kennedy assumed personal responsibility for the Cuban debacle, he quoted an old saying, "victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan."

Regardless of party, a President is entitled to understanding in his responsibilities. Since I have been in the Senate,



it has been my practice to extend to the incumbent of the Presidency whatever I could in the way of support, cooperation and consolation. In doing so, however, I have not overlooked the separate Constitutional obligations of Senators nor the Leadership's additional responsibilities to the other 99 members of the Senate. Three Presidents have known that I do not stand on partisan ground. They have also known where I stood on the issues.

The Nixon Doctrine is one of those issues because it is a touchstone in our relations with Asia and the rest of the world. The Doctrine was set forth with the intent of bringing about an adjustment in U. S. policy in the Western Pacific. Eighteen months later, there is concern with the follow-through.

This concern does not arise from a retrogression to some sort of isolation. Provided the issues are clearly presented, the people of the nation are discerning enough to recognize that the alternative to one distortion is not another. I reiterate, provided the issues are clearly presented.



There is no escape by national isolation from the complexities of our times. We will have to live with these complexities and work with them, and do so in cooperation with other nations of the world or in conflict with other nations. There is no shell of sky large enough to shut out the rest of the globe. There is no sweep of ocean. There is no electronic shield, no insulating web of missiles.

Isolation is no answer to the nation's needs. But neither is internationalism some sort of incantation against the ills of international life. We will search in vain to safeguard our security and well-being by an internationalism which leads us to project military forces into the farthest reaches of the globe and to maintain them there without the comprehension of the people of this nation and without the understanding and cooperation of the rest of the world's people.

That reality ought not to be overlooked in an excess of concern in the Executive Branch that the American people

will "retreat to isolation," at any suggestion of an adjustment in the present course of foreign policy. We would do well, instead, to note carefully the danger of persisting in a course which has already alienated many people at home and abroad and has led the nation a long way down the road to an isolated internationalism.

If I may lay aside, then, this non-issue of isolation along with partisan politics, as a basis for my remarks, I would like to turn your attention, now, to the Nixon Doctrine. The subject is of particular interest because shortly after the Doctrine was set forth in the summer of 1969, I went to Southeast Asia. I did so at the request of the President, and in the course of the journey, sought to convey some understanding of the President's new approach to Asia.

In a public report in September 1969, I pointed out that the Nixon Doctrine did not mean the United States was turning its back on Asia. Rather, the Doctrine was designed to



reduce the factor of U. S. military participation in the problems of that region. The Doctrine's aim, too, was to foreclose new situations of dependency as had developed in Viet Nam; contrary to our interests such situations tended to lead to involvement in Asian conflicts.

In further interpretation of the Doctrine, I noted that we intended to alter aid-policies by placing more emphasis on economic aid and less on military help. Even with regard to economic aid, moreover, it was to be expected that we would shift from a unilateral approach and participate when desirable in whatever multi-sided cooperation Asian nations were inclined to develop themselves.

I made clear that the Nixon Doctrine did, indeed, imply major adjustments in long-standing U. S. policies in the Western Pacific, policies which had been formulated in the aftermath of World War II and the Korean War. Circumstances had long since changed greatly and we had not kept pace. As

a result, we found ourselves more deeply involved in Southeast Asia than warranted by the nation's interests. The U. S. role had become both anachronistic and wasteful. Most seriously, an over-long persistence in that role had led us into the tragedy of Viet Nam. The time had come to alter it.

It seemed to me that the essence of the Nixon Doctrine was to be found in the President's frequent references to a new "low-profile" policy. I agreed fully with that concept and so stated many times in Asia and at home. Moreover, the Administration soon made clear that the new Doctrine would apply, not only in Asia but throughout the world. With that extension, too, I agreed completely.

During 1969 and the early months of 1970, the Executive Branch elaborated the Nixon Doctrine in specific actions. The U. S. military base structure was curtailed in the Far East. Reductions were made in official personnel throughout the region. The Executive Branch entered into negotiations with the Japanese



government pursuant to the agreement which the President had achieved with Japan on the Okinawan question. That settlement promised to remove a spur of increasing tension in U. S.-Japanese relations. Largely by the President's personal efforts, diplomatic relations were restored with Prince Sihanouk's Cambodia and the restoration seemed to check the danger of a spill-over of Vietnamese hostilities into that nation. Initiatives were also taken by the President to enlarge contact with the Chinese People's Republic.

The most significant implications of the Nixon Doctrine, of course, involved Viet Nam. Despite obvious difficulties of immediate application, U. S. military forces in Viet Nam were reduced by 100,000 men between July 1969 and April 1970. With the reduction came a sharp drop in casualties and in the cost of the war. At the same time, new U. S. leadership was supplied to the negotiations in Paris. Hopes quickened for a negotiated peace in Viet Nam.

Elsewhere in the world, the inertia in U. S. policy seemed to be ending under the impetus of the Nixon Doctrine. There were indications of an intent to reduce the cost of maintaining a garrison of half a million military personnel and dependents in Western Europe. The new SALT talks on disarmament, as they involved ICBM's, ABM's and other laconic euphemisms of civilization's suicide, opened on an encouraging note. A Defense budget, swollen with cost over-runs and other waste as well as the price of the Vietnamese War, began to be curbed in the wake of the Senate's great debate on the Anti-Ballistics Missile.

The Nixon Doctrine, in short, appeared to have set off a chain reaction which promised to bring up to date the nation's international security affairs. It was most welcome in the Senate and in the nation. For a long time, we had remained wedded to the needs of another era. We had continued to indulge ourselves with policies and practices born of



another time. As a nation, we had been so deeply concerned for two decades with threats from abroad, that we had overlooked the erosion of the nation's inner security and well-being.

The Nixon Doctrine opened the shutters on these musty thought-processes. In so doing, there was revealed the possibility of adjustments of policy abroad which would also redound to the benefit of the situation within the nation. Billions of dollars of taxes, not to speak of the creative skills and energy of young people, were involved in the excessive and increasingly isolated search for national security in Viet Nam and elsewhere abroad. With the advent of the Nixon Doctrine, it seemed that some of these immense resources might begin to be channeled into urgent needs at home.

In my judgment, the President deserves great credit for having established this turning point. The Nixon Doctrine was an invitation to change--long overdue change--if I may use that overworked word, a change in priorities.

Then, there was April 30, 1970 and the American military incursion into Cambodia. The event is recent. You remember it and there is no point in a re-run. To make my position clear, let me say only that I opposed the incursion before it began; I was saddened by its beginning; I regard it, even now, with regret, although it is held in some quarters to have been a "successful operation."

At the time, it seemed to me that the incursion thrust the war deep into what had been, for all practical purposes, the only non-dependent nation in Indochina in which there existed a measure of stability self-achieved under a reasonably responsive civilian government. Most serious, the Cambodian incursion enlarged the battlefield. In so doing, it promised to prolong the U. S. involvement and open up a new source of U. S. casualties.

That position was not arrived at lightly. It is not re-asserted lightly now. The Cambodian incursion was justified



largely in terms of saving American lives. That is a consideration that has always weighed heavily with me and every other member of the Senate. It was apparent then, however, and it is apparent now that the termination of our involvement in the war in Viet Nam and a prompt withdrawal would save far more American lives <sup>& return our POW's more quickly</sup> than an enlargement of the area of conflict.

As it was, in the brief invasion of Cambodia a year ago 362 Americans died and 2,205 were wounded--in the process of "saving American lives." And in the process of "saving American lives," our forces in Indochina have incurred casualties of 4,000 dead and 18,000 wounded in the year since the Cambodian incursion. In the light of those grim figures, it may well be asked--are we saving lives or saving face? The question becomes even more pertinent when put in the perspective of total casualties: 54,000 dead; almost 300,000 wounded, since the beginning of this tragic conflict.

This sacrifice of American life to date is indicative of the magnitude of the war's toll. The people, for whose benefit it was intended, have, themselves, suffered greatly in the war. Hundreds of thousands of Indochinese men, women and children, have been killed and maimed. The war has created millions of refugees. Ancient cultures and the natural environment in which they flourished have been damaged beyond calculation by the devastating tools of modern warfare.

If the war was widened by the Cambodian incursion, it was widened, again, by the Laotian incursion. With that development, what was once the Vietnamese conflict became a full-fledged Indochina war. What was once an American involvement in South-Viet Nam was consolidated into an American involvement in all of Indochina. Notwithstanding linguistic gymnastics, an extension of warfare into vast new areas of combat cannot be depicted as a contraction of the war.



The fact is that we are still held fast in the ever-shifting current of a struggle which has gone on almost continuously for a quarter of a century. It is a war without light at the end of the tunnel. It is a war which does not stop at the borders of South Viet Nam. It does not stop at the borders of Cambodia. It does not stop at the borders of Laos. Where, then, is the end? Indeed, there may be none, unless it is in Peking or beyond, in a worldwide nuclear inferno.

How we are entrapped or, more accurately perhaps, how we entrap ourselves in this pattern of expanding violence is illustrated by events in Cambodia. I would note that on April 30, 1970, there were scarcely a half-dozen American officials in Cambodia and they were carrying out the most limited diplomatic functions. There are now many times that number and they are carrying on a variety of functions.

On April 30, 1970, we had no obligations whatsoever to the government of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia; its fate was

in its own hands. Since the overthrow of Sihanouk, we have already made aid-commitments totaling \$260 million to the successor government. That government's fate is not in its own hands; it is now in ours. It is dependent for survival on the United States and on the Saigon government which, in turn, is dependent on the United States.

To be sure, the U. S. ground forces which were sent into the Cambodian border regions were withdrawn after a campaign of several weeks. To be sure, in Laos, U. S. service personnel have not set foot on the ground in any great numbers. Presumably, in deference to the Cooper-Church amendment, they have been restricted to hovering a few feet above the ground. However, U. S. planes and helicopters crisscross Laos and Cambodia many times a day. They fly missions of bombing and other direct combat support, supply, transport, evacuation, reconnaissance and whatever. U. S. planes and helicopters are now shot down in both Cambodia and Laos as well as in Viet Nam and men often



die when they are shot down. We do not disinvolve ourselves by withdrawing on the ground while we plunge in more deeply through the air. Involvement is involvement, whatever it is called.

To be sure, the President deserves every credit for having reduced overall U. S. troops numbers in Viet Nam by more than 200,000 since the beginning of his Administration. But there are over 300,000 Americans still in Indochina. Furthermore, the use of U. S. air-power seems much more intensive than a year ago--that, in a primitive region which has already been bombed with more than twice the total tonnage dropped in both World War II and the Korean War.

Costs are costs wherever incurred. Casualties are casualties whether they are received on the ground or in the air. While lower costs are better than higher and fewer casualties are obviously to be preferred to more, all losses are tragic in a mistaken war.

If it is not in the interest of this nation to be in the war with ground forces, how can it be with air forces? To be sure, it may seem more palatable but it is not more purposeful. It is not less wasteful.

The prerequisite of a meaningful application of the Nixon Doctrine in Southeast Asia seems to me to be the termination of the U. S. military involvement--land, air and sea--in Indochina and military withdrawal from that region, lock, stock and barrel. That termination is not yet visible. That withdrawal is not yet in sight.

It is not only with regard to Indochina that there are grounds for concern over what has happened to the Nixon Doctrine since April 1970. Digressions or delays appear to be developing elsewhere in Asia. It is many months later, but the details of the Okinawan settlement have yet to be completed by the Executive Branch. Difficulties with Japan have also arisen over trade questions and a short time ago were even allowed to



reach a tempestuous stage. As I see it, U. S.-Japanese trade is of immense value to both countries even as a political relationship of mutual consideration and forbearance between the two countries is essential to the elaboration of the Nixon Doctrine in the Western Pacific. It is disturbing, therefore, to find what appears to be the intrusion of petty bickering and personal pique into these vital ties.

Also of great importance to the Nixon Doctrine is the restoration of civility with the Chinese People's Republic. The President has shown a consistent initiative in this connection. Whether a satisfactory relationship can be achieved at this time is another matter. Certainly, it is not a very promising prospect when the Indochinese war has again been extended to within minutes bombing range of the Chinese borders and, in the circumstances, the Chinese have re-affirmed publicly their complete support of the North Vietnamese. Moreover, U. S. policy has yet to come to grips with the vehement rejection of a "two-China"

concept by both the government of the Republic of China and the Chinese People's Republic. Both insist that Taiwan and mainland China are parts of one Chinese nation.

Elsewhere in the world, in Western Europe in particular, there seems also to have been a retrogression from the Nixon Doctrine. While the need for a cut in the consignment of U. S. forces to Europe is more and more recognized in the Senate, the reluctance of the Executive Branch to act remains as great under this Administration as it was under its predecessor. It is reluctance, apparently, stimulated by the anxieties of the German and other European governments who remain unwilling, nevertheless, to relieve this nation of any substantial part of the present one-sided burden of the costs of NATO defense.

To maintain U. S. forces in Europe is estimated to account for \$14 billion of the annual Defense Department budget. This expenditure is made, presumably, to forestall or to meet a possible military thrust from the Soviet Union. It is an



expenditure which has gone on year in and year out for almost two decades. In the meantime, by contrast, in the policies of both the Western European countries and the Soviet Union, the fear of such a conflict has been progressively downgraded and, today, the accent in both parts of Europe is almost entirely on the contacts of peace.

Let me make clear that the sentiment in the Senate for a change in U. S. policies regarding NATO has nothing to do with severing treaty relationships with Western Europe or with the complete withdrawal of the U. S. military garrison from Europe. The NATO treaty remains highly regarded and a U. S. military presence in Europe, as an earnest of the importance which this nation still attaches to the alliance, is a principle that has long been accepted. That is not the question. What is sought in the Senate, rather, is a substantial reduction in the half-million of U. S. forces with dependents that are maintained in Europe at such great cost to the people of this nation. The

resistance of the Executive Branch to this change in my judgment is ill-founded and may well produce, in time, a Congressional reaction which will compel drastic reductions.

To bring these remarks to a close, I want to note again, as I did at the outset, my deep belief in the urgency of the adjustments of U. S. policy which are implicit in the Nixon Doctrine. I would be less than candid, however, if I did not express the concern which I have with the divergencies, digressions, dodges and delays which have been encountered in carrying out the Doctrine.

We have not escaped the consequences of this procrastination at home. In my judgment the absence of a vigorous follow-through on the Doctrine has had much to do with the persistence of the inflation and the slack in the economy. It has had much to do with our continuing inability to confront fully the financial and other problems of the States and localities. It has had much to do with the inadequate way



in which we are meeting the whole range of compelling needs of our national life whether they be pollution, welfare, unemployment, violence or whatever.

There is blame enough to spare for things done and not done. Where the finger points often depends on who is pointing and I shall not point mine. The fundamental difficulty, as I see it, is that the President and the Congress function in a government grown immense. It is a government whose gears must grind in a complex synchronization if they are to grind at all. The machinery is not easily moved by the President alone and certainly not, alone, by the Congress. Yet it must be moved if there is to be a fulfillment of the promise of the Nixon Doctrine and a realistic adjustment of our policies in line with its implications. In my judgment, the primary need, the critical need, is an end to the involvement in Indochina: an end, period. In their separate Constitutional authority as necessary and, in cooperation, where possible, the effort must be made by the President and the Congress to meet that need.

The Republic deserves no less.